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Westly Announces Support for Submerged Native American Artifacts Project

SACRAMENTO – State Controller Steve Westly today announced his support for a pilot program to protect Native American artifacts submerged along the California coast.

“Californians understand the importance of protecting our precious cultural heritage,” said Westly, who also serves on the State Lands Commission. “This program will help ensure that the ancient Native American sites along our coast remain a living testament to state and tribal history.”

Divers have disturbed or stolen protected artifacts – some unaware of their cultural value and others, like private collectors, who purposely loot the sites. Many of the sites are located in shallow rocky reefs, while others are offshore at depths of 30-60 feet.

The program, created by the Western Alliance for Nature in conjunction with the Kumeyaay/Diegueño Bands of Southern California, will engage volunteers from environmental and community groups and local agencies in a public education campaign to protect the submerged sites from looters. Under California law, pillaging these sites can be a misdemeanor or felony.

The State Lands Commission, which manages waters up to 3 miles from the coast, is assisting in developing a management program for the sites. The Commission will also distribute educational materials for divers at marinas and assist agencies that are mapping known underwater archaeological sites.

The Southern California coastline, from Point Conception south to the international border, is home to 110 prehistoric artifact sites – a density unparalleled in North America. The Kumeyaay/Diegueño have claimed at least 41 sites along the coastline of San Diego, primarily off La Jolla and Point Loma.

Attached is Westly’s proclamation recognizing the Kumeyaay/Diegueño’s work on this project.

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Proclamation

presented to

Kumeyaay/Diegueno Bands of Southern California

Whereas, The Kumeyaay/Diegueno people have inhabited the San Diego area for centuries, representing a lineage that is traceable back to the San Dieguito Paleo Indians from approximately 10,000 to 12,000 B.C.E.;

Whereas, The Kumeyaay/Diegueno Nation, has developed a first-of-its-kind program that protects submerged Native American archeological and cultural sites along the Southern California Coastline;

Whereas, The Kumeyaay/Diegueno Nation's off-shore cultural protection objectives are to educate beach visitors, swimmers and divers on the significance of the submerged artifacts, and to mobilize volunteers and public agencies to protect the sites from looting;

Whereas, The Kumeyaay/Diegueno Nation, is being recognized for enhancing their community with leadership, service and a steadfast conviction for making a difference;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that I, Steve Westly, State Controller of California, hereby recognize the Kumeyaay/Diegueno Bands for leadership they have shown and for the remarkable work they have done acting as a positive force within their community.

Steve Westly

California State Controller
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